

BOOK REVIEW

Miklós Kontra (ed.): A magyar nyelv Ausztriában és Szlovéniában [The Hungarian language in Austria and Slovenia]. Budapest–Alsóőr–Lendva: Gondolat Kiadó–Imre Samu Nyelvi Intézet–Magyar Nemzetiségi Művelődési Intézet, 2012. pp 352.

1. The aim of the volume is to give a thorough presentation of the situation of the Hungarian language in Austria and Slovenia. It is in fact the fourth volume in the series (also edited by Miklós Kontra) entitled *The Hungarian language in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the 20th century*. The series is the result of the sociolinguistic survey *The Sociolinguistics of Hungarian Outside Hungary* (SHOH), carried out in 1995–1996 in a number of countries neighbouring Hungary (Langman 2006). “The project aimed to carry out original research in order to write a comprehensive study on the sociolinguistic situation of the Hungarian national minorities in Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Yugoslavia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria” (Kontra 1999, 1).

Among the three volumes published in the series before, the first one (1998, by István Csernicskó) discusses the state of the Hungarian language in Zakarpattia/Subcarpathia (Ukraine), the second one (1999, by Lajos Göncz) in Vojvodina (Serbia) and the third one (2000, by István Lanstyák) in Slovakia. The present volume was published 12 years after the third one mainly due to the untimely death of István Szépfalusi, Lutheran pastor and sociographer from Vienna, the main author of the chapters on Austria. In addition to him, three more authors contributed to the present volume: Ottó Vörös, Anikó Beregszászi and Miklós Kontra.

The situation of the Hungarian language in Austria and in Slovenia is covered in separate parts of the book. Adopting the principles set up by Goebel et al. (1997), the authors present detailed analyses of the social, economic, cultural and political factors shaping the use of Hungarian in the two countries. The study also reports the results of an empirical survey conducted in 1996 “with a quota sample stratified for age, education and

settlement type in [...] Slovenia ($N = 67$) and Austria ($N = 60$), with a control group in Hungary ($N = 107$). The survey gathered language-in-society data (324 variables) and linguistic data (59 variables). The linguistic data are of two kinds: judgement and production" (Kontra 1999, 1). Both parts start with a detailed description of data sampling (see pp. 36–40 and 179–180).

The series editor notes in the introduction that "before the fall of Communism no serious linguistic research was carried out concerning the Hungarian national minorities" (p. 349) and thus the work is more than overdue. The first book to address the issue (Kontra 1991) was limited to the Hungarian language in Czechoslovakia and Austria.

The editor also stresses the fact that the Hungarians living in a minority are undergoing forced assimilation. Therefore, there is need for a detailed and comprehensive study to define and address the problems these communities encounter. According to the editor, one of the most important problems is that in the relevant countries there is no proper language policy regarding Hungarians, and that is why it is difficult to formulate strategies that help to slow down assimilation. All of the authors believe that the ongoing language shift of the 6000 to 8000 indigenous Hungarians in Prekmurje, Slovenia and the 4000 to 5000 indigenous Hungarians in Burgenland, Austria cannot be reversed, but it would still be possible to slow down the shift.

2. The authors of the first part on the state of Hungarian in Austria are the late István Szépfalusi (1932–2000), with linguists Anikó Beregszászi (Subcarpathia, Ukraine), and Miklós Kontra (Szeged, Hungary).

The chapters outlining the historical, social and demographic background are the work of István Szépfalusi. From a historical point of view, three groups can be distinguished: a historical group of Austrian Hungarians, a migrational group and the indigenous community. The Hungarian communities of Vienna and Graz are very much like that of Bucharest: they have always been living outside the boundaries of the historical language area. Szépfalusi included the whole Hungarian community in the sampling for the sociolinguistic survey and not only those living in Burgenland and Vienna (p. 30–31).

The indigenous Hungarian community has been present in the area of present-day Austria since the 11th century (Fodor 1977), most probably as descendants of frontier guards sent to protect the Hungarian Kingdom. They were given nobility during the late 15th century (Érszegi 1977) and their privileges were consolidated by Matthias of Austria in 1610 (Juhász

1976). The most important historical events that define this community include Matthias Corvinus' rule in Vienna. The impact of the presence of Hungarians at the University of Vienna and other academies is discussed, as well as those of the cultural and religious institutions they founded (e.g., the Pazmaneum, the Vienna Hungarian Institute of History and the Collegium Hungaricum – see Schneider 1989).

Szépfolusi points out that census data on Hungarian ethnics and speakers of Hungarian in Austria need to be used very carefully: after World War I, the official censuses used the key term *Umgangssprache* 'vernacular' referring to the languages the inhabitants spoke with slightly different meanings than before the war. Nevertheless, the volume includes detailed tables presenting the ethnic composition of the different towns and districts using data from the 1923, 1971, 1981 and 1991 censuses, as well as maps showing these ethnic compositions in 1910 and 2001 (pp. 47–49).

The author also discusses the migration of Hungarians in the 1980's, as this has had a serious impact on Austrian demographics: during this period the number of Hungarians in Austria increased by 13,500, mainly due to immigrants from Hungary (7000), Romania (5000) and from other regions (mainly from Vojvodina). A detailed sociography of the Hungarian community according to citizenship, age, education, occupation and gender is provided with tables for the entire group, as well as for the Hungarians in Burgenland and in Vienna separately (pp. 50–58).

The volume continues with the discussion of the political status of the Hungarian community and language from 1919 on, presenting the most relevant legal documents (e.g., the 1976 Law on Ethnic Minorities or *Volksgruppengesetz*) in the context of the political events of the 20th century (the Anschluss, World War II, etc.). Subsequent chapters outline the economic policy of the state with respect to ethnic minorities and describe the most important Hungarian religious communities and cultural institutions.

The chapters discussing issues of language use are signed by Anikó Beregszászi (the chapter on domains of language use) and Miklós Kontra (the chapters on levels of language use, prestige of the Hungarian and German languages, linguistic difficulties, interferences and loans, language loss, language shift and Hungarian language use in the family). Language choice data regarding interactions in health care institutions, with the police, at banks, at church, in private correspondence, with friends and neighbours, with the family, etc., show that the use of Hungarian tends to be restricted to family and friends, while in the public domains the majority language predominates.

The bilingualism of Hungarians in Austria is analysed in a chapter on the sociolinguistic variables by presenting self-reported data from the minority speakers regarding their proficiency in Hungarian as opposed to the state language, the prestige of Hungarian vs. German, the verbal repertoires of the minority communities and the varieties of Hungarian and German used. We present some of the data and conclusions below.

3. The second part of the book (on Hungarian in Slovenia) was written by linguists Ottó Vörös (Szombathely, Hungary) and Miklós Kontra. Similarly to the part on Hungarian in Austria, individual chapters are devoted to the demographic, geographical, social, historical and cultural characteristics of the Hungarian minority. The language rights of the minorities are discussed with special regard to the use of Hungarian in public education. This part also includes a chapter by Miklós Kontra on the domains of language use and the dynamics of bilingualism.

The chapter on the use of Hungarian in Slovenia focuses on the historical region of Prekmurje and on the events that shaped this linguistic and ethnic community. As opposed to the case in Austria, in Slovenia there have been no significant ethnic conflicts between the Hungarians and the Slovenian majority (except for short periods of administrative reform).

A two-tier model of bilingual education was introduced in Prekmurje in 1959, which aims at maintaining both languages on an equal basis. The bilingual classes are attended both by pupils of Slovene and Hungarian ethnic origin, and thus the classes are held in both mother tongues (Novak Lukanovič 1999). This school system seems to have slowed down the effects of assimilation, and has had an important political effect as well: it has helped the members of the two communities get to know one another. Nevertheless – Vörös concludes – it can work only in the case of a small community (p. 193). The Hungarian community is also present in cultural institutions as well as in university education at the University of Maribor (cf. the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature).

Vörös presents the troubled history of the region and the most important political decisions that affected the Hungarian community in present-day Slovenia: the stipulations of the 1921 constitution regarding the education of minorities, and the views reflected in the 1974 constitution. The chapter also features relevant data regarding Hungarians in different census reports.

The chapter on the national identification of the Hungarians in Prekmurje and the chapters on sociolinguistic variables by Miklós Kontra include a discussion of the responses of Hungarians in Slovenia regarding

their degree of identification with the region and various political entities. The data show that they are most attached to their local settlements and region (Prekmurje), that prior to 1991 they were more attached to Yugoslavia than to Slovenia, and that they are the least attached to Hungary. Furthermore, among the minority groups surveyed in the SHOS project, their group is the one that is the least attached to Hungary (pp. 200–202).

The chapter on the domains of language use, also by Miklós Kontra, gives a detailed presentation of the history of bilingual and minority language education. It also includes the analysis of questionnaire responses regarding other domains of language use, such as the preferred language of reading, television, radio, as well as language use in the family and other private domains. Kontra's chapter on the dynamics of bilingualism includes the analysis of self-reported data on the minority speakers' proficiency in Hungarian as opposed to the state languages, the prestige of Hungarian versus Slovenian, the verbal repertoires of the minority communities and the varieties of Hungarian and Slovenian. In assessing which the most beautiful variant of the Hungarian language is, the Hungarian speakers of Prekmurje do not consider their own version as beautiful as those of other minority regions. The author also presents self-reported data on linguistic difficulties Hungarians in Slovenia face when using their language variant in Hungary as well as on perceived linguistic differences between Hungary and Slovenia (pp. 241–242).

4. Both parts of the volume include a chapter discussing the results of questionnaire surveys among minority speakers, in which participants were asked to choose between two forms (representing the standard form and the contact form) on the basis of which they find “more natural”. The forms tested represent four types of sociolinguistic variables (distinguished by Lastyák and Szabó Mihály 1997):

1. universal Hungarian variables (which can be found in the entire language area).

(a) the use of *-b Vn* (inessive suffix) instead of *-b V* (illative suffix):

- (1) Ott van egy szék a szoba sark-á-ban.
there is.3SG.PRS a chair the room corner-POSS.INESSIVE
'There is a chair in the corner of the room.' (standard form)
- (2) Ott van egy szék a szoba sark-á-ba.
there is.3SG.PRS a chair the room corner-POSS.ILLATIVE
'There is a chair in the corner of the room.' (contact form)

(b) the use of the imperative/subjunctive form of verbs ending in *t* instead of the indicative one:

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- (3) Nem szeretem, ha valaki elhalasztja a döntéseket.
 no like.1SG.PRS if someone postpone.3SG.PRS.IND.DEF the decision.PL.ACC
 ‘I don’t like it when someone postpones decisions.’ (standard form)
- (4) Nem szeretem, ha valaki elhalassza a döntéseket.
 no like.1SG.PRS if someone postpone.3SG.PRS.IMP/SUBJ.DEF the decision.PL.ACC
 ‘I don’t like it when someone postpones decisions.’ (non-standard form)

2. universal contact variables (which are present both in- and outside Hungary, but since they have a parallel in the contact languages, they can be more frequent in minority contexts.

(a) reference to paired body parts with the singular vs. plural form:

- (5) Kati néninek még a lába is fáj.
 Kati aunt.DAT even the leg.POSS.SG.3SG also hurt.3SG
 ‘Aunt Kati’s leg also hurts.’ (more standard form)
- (6) Kati néninek még a lábai is fáznak.
 Kati aunt.DAT even the leg.POSS.PL.3SG also hurt.3PL
 ‘Aunt Kati’s legs also hurt.’ (contact form)

(b) analytic vs. synthetic diminutive forms:

- (7) Megütötte a kis kezedet?
 hit.PST.2SG the little hand.POSS.SG.2SG.ACC
 ‘Did you hit your little hands?’ (more standard form)
- (8) Megütötte a kezcsekédet?
 hit.PST.2SG the hand.DIMINUTIVE.POSS.SG.2SG.ACC
 ‘Did you hit your little hands?’ (contact form)

3. analogue contact variables (variables used in Hungary as well; their meaning is different due to the effects of the contact language), for example “feminisation” (separate feminine forms for names of professions, etc.):

- (9) Anyám egy középiskolában tanít, ő tehát tanár.
 mother1SG.POSS a high school.INESSIVE teach3SG.PRS she so teacher
 ‘My mother teaches in a high school, so she is a teacher.’ (standard form)
- (10) Anyám egy középiskolában tanít, ő tehát tanárnő.
 mother1SG.POSS a high school.INESSIVE teach3SG.PRS she so teacher-woman
 ‘My mother teaches in a high school, so she is a teacher.’ (contact form)

4. contact variables that do not have an equivalent in Hungary; this category is represented by compounds vs. analytic (adjective + noun) structures:

- (11) lég-teré-t
air-space-ACC
(standard form)

- (12) lég-i teré-t
air-of space-ACC
(contact form)

Kontra shows that statistically significant differences can be observed in the case of some grammaticality judgments. For instance, 64% of the respondents in Austria and 75% of those in Slovenia, as opposed to 29% of the Hungarians in Hungary found an adjective + noun combination (e.g., *tagsági díj* ‘membership fee’) “more natural” than the corresponding compound form (e.g., *tagdíj* ‘membership fee’).

Statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) differences were found in the use of nouns denoting professions. When in a written sentence-completion task respondents were to complete the sentence *Anyám egy középiskolában tanít, ő tehát...* ‘My mother teaches in a high school, so she is a(n) ...’, 79% of the respondents in Austria and 75% of those in Slovenia used the word *tanárnő* ‘female teacher’ as opposed to the more standard Hungarian *tanár* ‘teacher, male or female’. The form *tanárnő* was only used by 41% of the respondents in Hungary.

The author points out that in several cases no difference can be observed between the contact variants of Hungarian and those spoken inside Hungary. For instance, when respondents had to complete the sentence in (13) in writing, 5% of the respondents in Austria and 2% of those in Slovenia used the badly stigmatized non-standard form in (14), as opposed to the standard Hungarian form in (15), while 4% of the Hungarians in Hungary did so.

- (13) Ha Péter rosszul váloga... meg a barátait, pórul jár.
if Peter badly choose... PFX the friend.POSS.3SG.PL.ACC ill fare.3SG
‘If Peter chooses his friends badly, he’ll soon fare ill.’

- (14) Ha Péter rosszul válogassa meg a barátait,
if Peter badly choose.3SG.IMP/SUBJ.DEF PFX the friend.POSS.3SG.PL.ACC
pórul jár.
ill fare.3SG

- (15) Ha Péter rosszul válogatja meg a barátait,
 if Peter badly choose.3SG.IND.PRS.DEF. PFX the friend.POSS.3SG.PL.ACC
 póru jár.
 ill fare.3SG

Three appendices complete the volume: facsimiles of the Austrian and Slovenian questionnaires used in the 1996 fieldwork, and 59 crosstabs of grammatical and lexical variables comparing the responses of the Austrian-Hungarian and Slovenian-Hungarian samples with those of the sample from Hungary.

5. The volume gives a comprehensive description of the history of the two Hungarian communities, the characteristics of their language use and bilingualism, and as such it provides an interesting insight into Hungarian language use outside Hungary. My main critical remark is that – most probably due to the fact that it was written by four authors, including linguists and non-linguists as well – there is a difference in emphasis between the two parts: while the first one (on the status of Hungarian in Austria) gives a significantly more detailed portrayal of the historical, social, political, cultural context, the second part (on the status of Hungarian in Slovenia) is much more focused on the analysis of the sociolinguistic variables and the dynamics of bilingualism.

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